

UCOW CKOFT, LL

FBIS 12

3 Chi Exch

MAO REPORTEDLY LOSES POWER OF SPEECH

LD250730 LONDON SUNDAY TELEGRAPH IN ENGLISH 25 MAY 75 P 2 LD

(ARTICLE: "MAO LOSES POWER OF SPEECH," BY OUR DIPLOMATIC STAFF)

(EXT) CHAIRMAN MAO TSE-TUNG, 81, HAS LOST THE POWER OF SPEECH AND CAN ONLY GRUNT AFFIRMATIVELY TO THE REMARKS OF HIS DISTINGUISHED VISITORS AFTER A SEVERE STROKE LAST AUTUMN.

HE DID NOT FULLY RECOVER FROM THE STROKE, WHICH WAS REPORTED EXCLUSIVELY IN THE DAILY TELEGRAPH. SINCE THAT TIME HIS HEALTH HAS SLOWLY DETERIORATED.

IN RECENT STATEMENTS TO RESIDENT CORRESPONDENTS IN PEKING PRESIDENT KIM IL-SONG OF NORTH KOREA AND MR LINDEMANS, THE PRIME MINISTER OF BELGIUM, HAVE SAID THAT CHAIRMAN MAO WAS "FIT AND ALERT."

BUT THEIR STAFFS HAVE SINCE DISCLOSED TO INTIMATES IN THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS THAT THE CHAIRMAN HAS LOST THE POWER TO COORDINATE HIS MUSCLES. HE IS EXTREMELY DEAF, HIS EYESIGHT IS POOR AND HE TENDS TO DRIBBLE AT THE MOUTH.

WINTER SOJOURN

LAST MONTH CHAIRMAN MAO RETURNED TO HIS EIGHT-ROOMED BUNGALOW IN THE FORBIDDEN CITY OF PEKING AFTER SPENDING THE WINTER IN THE RESORT TOWN OF HANGCHOW, WHICH ENJOYS A MILD CLIMATE.

IT WAS THERE HE RECEIVED MR MINTOFF, THE PRIME MINISTER OF MALTA, ON JANUARY 9 AND HERR FRANZ-JOSEF STRAUSS, THE WEST GERMAN OPPOSITION LEADER, EXACTLY A WEEK LATER.

THEN FOR FOUR MONTHS VISITING HEADS OF STATE WERE TOLD THE CHAIRMAN "HAD A COLD" OR WAS NOT "FEELING TOO FII," AND COULD NOT RECEIVE THEM.

LAST APPEARANCE

THE TRADITION THAT HEADS OF STATE AND VISITING PRIME MINISTERS, AS WELL AS HONOURED GUESTS, WERE INTRODUCED TO CHAIRMAN MAO GREW FROM THE TIME IN MAY, 1971, WHEN HE CEASED TO MAKE PUBLIC APPEARANCES, THOUGH THE CHINESE PEOPLE WATCHED HIM TALK WITH HIS VISITORS ON TELEVISION.

HIS LAST SEMI-PUBLIC APPEARANCE WAS AT THE TENTH PARTY CONGRESS IN AUGUST, 1973, BUT HE DID NOT SPEAK.

25 MAY 0811Z PC/IM